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## A CENTER FOR SPANISH CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

I take pleasure in making known to the members of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish a plan which we in New York have under way for the establishment in the metropolis of a *Casa de las Españas*, to be a center for Spanish culture in this country. Probably the best way to explain the project is to give here the outline which was agreed upon in a tentative manner at an informal dinner and meeting held here the evening of October 26th. Twelve or fifteen representative educators and business men were the guests on this occasion of Professor Stephen P. Duggan, Director of the Institute of International Education (Carnegie Foundation). The accompanying outline will show what it is hoped can be done to carry to a successful conclusion the establishment in perpetuity of such a center as is therein described.

The New York Chapter of our Association is one of the strongest backers of the project. The local president, Mr. William A. Barlow, and a committee of eighteen members have taken an active and enthusiastic part in forming these plans and are prepared to promote them with all their strength when the proper time comes. It will be noted that it is proposed to have on the Board of Directors of the *Casa* a member of the Association resident in New York as our representative. Up to the present I have assumed that rôle. We believe here that this *Casa*, if properly endowed and established, may be made the unifying and directing force of a great many movements in the field of Hispanism in this country that at present lack organization and effectiveness.

The work of organization is costing the Association nothing and will cost it nothing in the future, nothing but the effort of coöperation and the giving of moral support. All members of the Association will be welcome to full use of the facilities of the house, either when they call in person when in New York, or when they seek its aid in any way by correspondence.

Suggestions from our members are sought by the writer. Help of our members is sought when we reach that critical stage of raising funds. We believe that most of those funds can be raised here in New York, but we shall also seek contributions from others who are able to give and who are known to be interested in things Span-

ish. Possibly you know of some one in your community who might contribute. If so, will you not, when the time comes, endeavor to secure that person's aid? This is not merely a New York City affair; the benefits of such a house would be for the whole United States.

Please note two things very carefully: Spanish culture in its deepest meanings is to be emphasized, and the *Casa* is to be established chiefly by North Americans, with North American funds, and its activities will be for the benefit of North Americans. It will not be a house subsidized in any manner by any foreign government, nor its affairs controlled, in the last analysis, for the interest of anyone but North American citizens.

Allow us to count upon the moral support of each who may read these lines.

LAWRENCE A. WILKINS

## LA CASA DE LAS ESPAÑAS

### THE WORLD AND SPAIN

Isolated by mountains and seas, defeated, often despised and misrepresented, Spain has suffered a tragic fate. Her glorious achievements and splendid culture have, in recent times, been almost completely ignored by the world at large. In Europe the force of tradition has been sufficient to bar an unprejudiced view and a just estimate of Hispanic culture and civilization. America, on the other hand, is peculiarly well fitted and situated for the task of rescuing from neglect and giving back to the world for its betterment Spain's very great contribution to civilization. Our hemisphere was discovered by a navigator and ships sent by a Spanish queen. Two-thirds of our country was explored by conquistadores under the Spanish flag. What the Spanish conquistadores achieved in the New World in the sixteenth century, one of the most remarkable chapters in human history, made the Americas of today possible. The great Hispanic lands to the south of us, republics all and all the offspring of one mother, Spain, are our neighbors, their citizens are our fellow-Americans. Our future and theirs are inextricably interwoven. Human progress, the progress of the Americas, makes absolutely indispensable an understanding on our part of the culture which they have inherited and the culture which they have developed.

### THE HISPANIC MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

We are beginning to gain that understanding. The foundation is being laid by a nation-wide study of the Spanish language. Spanish is now being taught on a par with other languages in practically every college and university of the country. In many institutions it is the leading foreign language. In our secondary schools the number of students electing Spanish is enormous. More than 28,000 high-school students in New York City alone study Spanish. Distinguished Spanish scholars, teachers, and men of letters

have found an enthusiastic welcome in our land. Interest in things Spanish is found on every hand, in the newspapers and periodicals, in the lecture halls, and in the theaters.

No propaganda has been made for Spanish. This growth of the past five years is the result of the increasing realization among our citizens of the worth of Spanish culture manifested in the art, literature, architecture, history, and music of Spain and Spanish America. It is true that interest has been stimulated by the lure of Spanish-American trade, and be it said in passing that the study of a language is based on exceedingly sound foundations when it rests upon a definite practical value of usefulness in international commerce. And the study of a foreign language for any purpose awakens unfailingly a certain sympathy for the people that speak it, and opens the way for a more thorough understanding and appreciation of that people. Interest in things Spanish is, however, far from being confined to the realm of trade, and an approach to Spanish-speaking peoples that is narrowed by purely utilitarian aims often singularly fails in effectiveness. Spanish-American business circles comprise in most cases men of the highest culture and breadth of view, men who expect in their intercourse of trade to find in the foreigner an understanding and appreciation that far outstrips selfish commercial ends.

The number is steadily increasing of those North Americans whose insight into Spanish history and culture is making them genuine interpreters of these things to their fellow-countrymen. The precursors of this class were men like Irving, Prescott, Ticknor, Longfellow, and Lowell. The work of such men of the past is being carried forward today by a large number of men of great ability.

#### TIMELINESS OF THE MOVEMENT

The sudden rise of interest in things Hispanic could not have come at a time more auspicious than the present. The virile Spanish genius is awakening to new achievement. The authors of Spanish literature of the Golden Age have worthy continuators in the Spanish novelists, cuentistas, poets, and dramatists of today—Benevante, recipient of the Nobel prize for literature for 1920; Martínez Sierra, the Countess Emilia Pardo Bazán, Pío Baroja, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and a score of others. The North American public has now in its list of Spanish writers at least two names which it remembers—Cervantes and Blasco Ibáñez. None can afford to overlook the work of Spanish artists such as Sorolla, Zuloaga, Pinazo, and Benlliure. Delightful surprises await the uninitiated in every aesthetic realm.

Work of the highest merit is found among Spanish-American writers. Rubén Darío, Amado Nervo, Blanco Fombona, Santos Chocano, José Enrique Rodó, and many others stimulate and justify the Spanish movement in the United States.

#### NEED OF AN ACTIVE CENTER FOR THIS MOVEMENT

This movement has found leaders and associations to promote its cause. The American Association of Teachers of Spanish is the most flourishing organization of its kind in our country, and possesses in HISPANIA an organ of exceptional interest and value. The Hispanic Society of America has done an unequaled and unsurpassable work with its library, museum, and

the opportunities it offers and the encouragement it gives to Hispanists. The Institute of International Education has in its short existence done great things toward promoting closer relations between scholars of Spain and those of the United States. The Inter-American Division of the American Association for International Conciliation, and the Pan-American Society of the United States have promoted most effectively an understanding between the public men, educators and literary men of North and South America. The Pan-American Union has been the medium of official and semi-official rapprochement of American republics. The Inter-American High Commission has done similar work of great value.

But there are as yet many loose ends that need binding up, that need organization, especially in matters pertaining to the purely cultural side of things Spanish. If our country is to profit as it should from the wide-spread interest in Spanish, the movement above outlined needs a center from which may radiate inspiration, suggestive direction, organization, and to which may flow from various parts of the world the many trickling streams of information and opportunity which at present in many cases have no outlet or direction. A reservoir may thus be created from these accumulated resources, and from it power may be generated for the systematic vitalization and organization of a much-needed work.

#### THE CASA DE LAS ESPAÑAS

Such a center it is proposed to establish in New York City, the metropolis of the Americas. It would be a center for the highest ideals of Spanish culture. Emphasis would be placed upon the deeper meanings of that culture.

A *casa*, or house, would be provided, to be known as the *Casa de las Españas*, as headquarters or center for the following things:

1. The Spanish Bureau, which has already been functioning for a year. Students and professors from Spain and Spanish-America desiring exact, definite information about educational opportunities in the United States would, as in the past, receive through this Bureau help in their studies of and in the United States. Teachers and students of this country desiring similar information and help in regard to Spain and Spanish-America would, as in the past, receive therefrom the guidance they need. The past year fully 500 teachers of Spanish in this country corresponded with this Bureau. Its work for the coming year will be much enlarged and will need more than ever before the advantages that would be provided in and by this house.

2. Lectures by eminent Hispanists from abroad and from our own country. These lectures would have a purely cultural aspect.

3. Extension of these lectures to other universities, colleges, and centers.

4. Entertainment of eminent foreign Hispanists, who would make the house their headquarters and even their place of residence for short periods of time.

5. Meetings of clubs, especially of the Instituto de las Españas, the newly formed club for Spanish culture which at present has its center at Columbia University. This club embraces membership from all parts of New York City and vicinity.

6. Organization of the college Spanish clubs of the country into one large affiliation, with headquarters here.

7. Social gatherings, *veladas* and *tertulias*, say once a month, of all interested in the work of the *casa*; speeches, illustrated talks, programs of Spanish music to be given. A sort of a replica on a small scale of the Ateneo of Madrid.

8. A library of slides illustrative of the life and customs, art, and architecture of Hispanic countries. These would be used in the *casa* with a projection machine to be secured, and lent to schools, colleges, and clubs.

9. A library of representative books on these same topics for the use of those interested. A library of books in Spanish and English on similar phases of the life of the United States. Representative Spanish and Spanish-American magazines and newspapers to be supplied. This sort of a library would not in any sense duplicate the other collections of books available in the city.

10. Encouragement of Spanish art by arranging for occasional exhibits of paintings.

11. Encouragement of the interchange of professors between the institutions of this country and those of Hispanic lands.

12. Encouragement of a similar exchange of students, especially in the colleges and universities.

13. Encouragement of the study of Spanish (and of Portuguese) in the schools and colleges of the United States.

14. Encouragement of the better preparation of teachers of Spanish.

15. Establishment of a bureau for international correspondence between students in high schools and colleges of this country and Hispanic nations.

16. Possibly the establishment of a monthly bulletin of the Casa.

#### WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE THIS CASA A REALITY?

1. A fund with which to purchase, furnish, and maintain such a house. It is estimated by those interested that a sum of one hundred thousand dollars would be necessary to buy, equip, and support by endowment such a house. Or the sum of fifty thousand dollars could be applied to the purchase and equipment of the house and funds sought by pledge each year for its maintenance.

2. The house should be located near some center of learning, preferably near Columbia University, the chief educational institution of this city. In order to secure perpetuity for the house it might be nominally donated to Columbia University, but governed by a Board of Directors to be composed of the following: the Director of the Institute of International Education; the delegate of the Ministry of Public Instruction of Spain; a Professor from the Department of Romance Languages of Columbia University; and a representative of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish, all resident in New York City.

3. The house should be furnished with typical and good Spanish furniture, including old pieces, if possible; also Spanish engravings and possibly tapestries. There should be a resident host or hostess, one who can speak Spanish. Business offices for the management of the house and its activities should be installed. Two rooms should be furnished for the occasional lodging of guests; no kitchen facilities to be provided. A caretaker would be necessary; also a staff of one or two stenographers capable of handling either English or Spanish correspondence.

4. As soon as funds are assured we shall seek from the Ministerio de Instrucción Pública of Spain, through the Ambassador of Spain in the United States, the donation of a library for the house; also certain prints and engravings that the Ministerio may have available. These things we may be able to secure through a Royal Order. In a somewhat similar manner contributions will be sought from Hispanic-American countries.

5. We shall not seek the donation of money from any foreign government, unless it be a small amount as evidence of approval and moral support. We prefer from abroad collections of books and similar contributions.

6. The whole plan centers in the idea of a house secured and maintained by funds contributed chiefly by North Americans, as a center for activities of the kind mentioned among North Americans, and controlled principally by them.

#### WAYS AND MEANS

1. A committee of prominent persons known for their international-mindedness and for their interest in things Spanish and Spanish-American shall be formed. In their hands shall be placed the matter of raising the funds needed. They would be aided by the proposed Board of Directors and by the members of the New York Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish, by the members of the Instituto de las Españas, and by such other persons as shall be willing to participate in the campaign.

2. A booklet of attractive appearance, incorporating material similar to the above, shall be printed and distributed among those persons whom we shall approach for funds.

3. A meeting shall be held at the home of some patron of the movement for the purpose of arousing interest and enthusiasm for the project, and for formulating further plans of action.

4. It is proposed that the following classes of patrons be established:

- (a) Founders, with donations of \$5,000 each;
- (b) Benefactors, with donations of \$2,500 each;
- (c) Life Patrons, with donations of \$1,000 each;
- (d) Patrons, with donations of \$500 each.
- (e) Contributors, with donations of from \$10 to \$500.

Suitable certificates, signed by the Board of Directors, shall be issued to those contributing to the fund.

5. Those present at the meeting of October 27, 1920, shall receive copies of this plan of procedure and, after reading it, shall send to Professor Duggan as soon as possible, their suggestions for the improvement thereof. It is intended that the prominent persons who accept membership on the Campaign Committee shall be asked to sign the version of the plan that may be decided upon, after, of course, they have passed upon it, and that this material shall constitute the "campaign book" of all persons interested in carrying to a successful conclusion the project for a Casa de Las Españas, situated in the City of New York.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

STEPHEN P. DUGGAN, *Director of the Institute of International Education*. JOHN L. GERIG, *Professor, Department of Romance Languages, Columbia University*. FEDERICO DE ONÍS, *Delegate of the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios, Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, of Spain*. LAWRENCE A. WILKINS, *Representative of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish*.